



GABRIELEÑO BAND OF MISSION INDIANS - KIZH NATION

Historically known as The San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians
recognized by the State of California as the aboriginal tribe of the Los Angeles basin

To the general public,

February 1, 2022

I am writing this letter regarding Toypurina. My name is Raegan Williams and I am a tribal member of the Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians – Kizh Nation. More specifically, I am a proven direct descendant of the medicine woman and Shaman, Toypurina. It is important to correct this ongoing cultural genocide.

As a native nation, we have endured centuries of attempts to eradicate our people and our culture. This began in the 1700's with the Spanish colonization of California. The Kizh people, my people, were enslaved to build the Spanish missions, and we were forced to abandon our traditions and culture. Because of this, even the Kizh name became a point of contention. We were given the name Gabrieleño by the Spaniards as we were associated with the mission we were forced to build, Mission San Gabriel. In the early 1900's, an anthropologist seeking to document the culture of our people met with a Gabrieleño woman who described the village as Toviscanga. This is the name of the village upon which the mission was built, as documented by Father Junipero Serra, in the official confirmation books. The Kizh Gabrieleño people, through colonizer tactics, were forced to be identified as the Tongva in the 1990s, in order to save a sacred spring. The tribe was advised by a professor of Native American Studies at California State Long Beach, to go by the name Tongva, in reference to our supposed original village. This forced our elders' hands to save a precious natural spring, one of the few remaining in present day Los Angeles. The tribe began, at that time only, to refer to themselves as the "Tongva," but this was not a traditional name used by the tribe and is not used by us today. However, the association with this name has now become a vehicle for several people, many without any records or proof of lineage of Kizh descent to lay claim to the LA basin, the homeland of the Kizh Nation. The Kizh Nation has meticulously documented records of every tribal member and their lineage, each recorded by genealogists through their research of the US census, written accounts, ethnographies, baptismal and confirmation records. Although this issue has split some families and there are true descendants within their group, for the most part, many of the people who refer to themselves as "Tongva" have no genealogical records to back up their claims. In fact, in 1994, the Gabrieleño Tribal Council/Kizh received state recognition from California. Nowhere in that state resolution does it mention the name "Tongva."

Andrew Salas, Chairman
Albert Perez, treasurer I

Nadine Salas, Vice-Chairman
Martha Gonzalez Lemos, treasurer II

Dr. Christina Swindall Martinez, secretary
Richard Gradias, Chairman of the council of Elders

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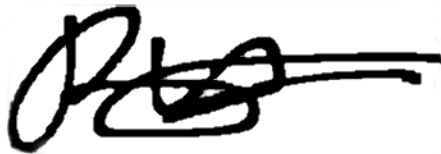
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The reason I am speaking on this issue is because these "Tongva" have also taken claim to my own ancestry. Toypurina led a rebellion against the mission system by going from village to village and gaining support to overtake the San Gabriel Mission. Although the mission leaders caught wind of the plan and the rebellion ultimately failed, she is still seen and admired as one of the only people to ever organize against the Spanish colonizers, let alone the only Native American woman to do so. The people going by the name of "Tongva" have acknowledged my family as the correct descendants of Toypurina, since this fact is well proven in our genealogy records that have also been validated by many academic sources. However, due to the fact that many of the "Tongva" members do not actually have confirmed records of their heritage, we do not associate "Toypurina" with the name "Tongva."

By referring to the "Tongva" as "the people of the land," you are continuing the tradition of ignoring history and crediting modern day colonizers. This perpetuates a notion of false activism. Not only would you be choosing to ignore the descendants of those you are trying to honor, but you are willfully siding with the people abusing our heritage for their own personal gain. I implore you to do what is right and acknowledge the proper descendants of the land you are on.

Aho,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ragen Williams', with a stylized, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Ragen Williams

Andrew Salas, Chairman
Albert Perez, treasurer I

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